

PHYSICAL DYNAMICS OF CHARACTER STRUCTURE—Bodily Form and Movement in Analytic Therapy—Alexander Lowen, M.D., Executive Director, Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis, New York. Grune and Stratton, New York, 1958. 358 pages, \$7.75.

The author states that this book attempts to bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and the concept of a physical approach to emotional disorders. Many of the roots of the material presented may be seen to rest on the contributions of Wilhelm Reich who was the author's teacher. In essence, the book propounds a theory and technique of what the author calls bioenergetic analysis. The book is divided into two parts. Part One represents Dr. Lowen's attempt to show that bioenergetic analysis is a logical extension of psychoanalysis. He does this by means of many references to Freud's works, and interpretations and extensions of these quotations so as to integrate his own techniques into analytic theory. Part Two is divided into nine chapters covering seven types of character structure, with case material to illustrate the author's approach to treatment of such conditions. Some of the conclusions which the author derives from the quotations from Freud are somewhat disturbing in that they appear to take rather large speculative leaps without there being any real indication in the book of the evidence on which such leaps are based. Certainly, few will take issue with the statement that unconscious attitudes are reflected in muscular tensions of one sort and another. However, conclusion that underdeveloped musculature of the lower extremities indicates that the patient has poor contact with the world; or that "the legs are undercharged and contact with the ground is not maintained . . . and, because of this lack of contact with the ground which is the counterpart of the psychological lack of contact with reality, one feels that these individuals are 'in the clouds,' 'floating somewhere up there,' 'out of touch.'" Nor is it very clear to me how the "lack of turgor in the skin (of a young woman patient) pointed to a very undercharged organism." Conclusions of this sort appear to represent too much a reification of concepts and an equivalence between speculative dynamics and physical structure, the basis for which is not clear to me from reading the book. In the chapter on the bioenergetic concept of the instincts, Dr. Lowen attempts to localize various feelings to various parts of the body, indicating that anger is experienced in the back of the body, specifically in the area between the shoulder blades. He reaches the conclusion that there is a swing of energy along the back, upward, in anger or rage, moving over the scalp and into the upper teeth, and that a downward movement along the back occurs in the sexual act. He illustrates these movements by diagrams portraying energy flow over the body by curved lines which he sees to have a meaning relative to character structure and dynamics.

The therapeutic application of these principles consists of attempting to influence the unconscious attitudes of the patient by means of attacks on the muscular results of these attitudes, as they are postulated. Specifically, the author has his patients beat on the couch with their fists. He requests them to go through various kinds of movement. He utilizes the gag reflex, although I was not able to gather from the book the precise ways in which he uses it. At several points in the book he refers to his techniques as analysis while indicating that he sees the patient once a week, during

which sessions the patient would talk in a more conventional way as well as go through the various muscular movements indicated.

It is not possible to evaluate very definitely the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of the author's techniques, merely from a perusal of this book. The physician inexperienced in psychiatry may mistake the author's speculations for scientific fact, and generally accepted psychiatric theory.

DONALD SCHWARTZ, M.D.

* * *

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY—Allen Wheelis, M.D. The decline of the superego and what is happening to American character as a result. W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., New York, 1958, 250 pages, \$3.95.

The Quest for Identity is a thought-provoking book which will be of interest to social scientists and physicians who are introspective and philosophically minded. Although dealing with the complicated problem of social change and the relation of psychoanalysis to it, it is well written and readable.

While problems like loss of personal identity, longing for the past when life was simpler, when standards were clearer, and relationships closer, have an autobiographical flavor, they are common enough in our society and others will be relieved to see a psychoanalyst, who is too often suspected of having all the answers, struggling with them.

The author properly emphasizes the price that is paid for the greater awareness and knowledge, the increase in complexity of life and the accelerated rate of change of our culture. He comments on the changed role which psychoanalysis plays in society. While in its beginning, it revealed social hypocrisies and was a challenge to the prevailing mores, now that it has become a part of society it has become a force for the maintenance of current mores and uniformity.

He feels that "the group has gained in authority at the expense of conscience. Formerly the standard whereby conduct was judged was within the individual. It was taken from the older generation, but the point is that it was *taken*. It was incorporated by the individual in his childhood and thereafter endured within him, beholden to no one, paying no tribute. Now the standard whereby conduct is judged is coming to be located in the group to which the individual adjusts. Specifically this means that the superego has become weaker, more susceptible to influence. The grounds on which it praises and prohibits are open to argument and particularly, to example."

This is normally the case in the process of maturation. Flexibility replaces the rigidity of the childhood conscience when rigidity is no longer required. The yearning for the past with its strict rules and regulations, its better control over impulses, and its dependence, is a yearning for something that never provides real security. But as the author points out "the chains that enslave also guard one from the unknown. The uses of reason have cut away most of our immemorial myths and superstitions, and without them we cringe in the sharp winds of uncertainty. We have fallen victim to our own power to destroy our myths." Reason cannot achieve certainty and uncertainty causes anxiety which psychoanalysis cannot resolve.

Torn by this dilemma, he feels that there still is a net advantage to the method of science.

NORMAN Q. BRILL, M.D.